

ANNUAL REPORT 1991

GEORGE BROWN
THE CITY COLLEGE

INTRODUCTION

The past year has been a period of reflection and planning at George Brown College. The college has clarified both its short- and long-term goals, and has sought new and innovative ways to meet the increasingly diverse needs of its community.

It has been a year in which new leadership has assumed a clear mandate to build on the strengths of the college and bring new directions and vision to its work.

The college has entered a process of comprehensive restructuring and renewal to reflect its priorities in coming years: accessibility, equity and equality, program excellence, human resource development, strategic planning, and service to our existing and potential students and clients.

To these ends it has strengthened its senior management team, including the Executive Director of Human Resources, to provide direction for major changes and developments at the college; it has created a new position at the vice-presidential level concerned exclusively with access, planning and partnership issues; it has reinforced its work in the social services and health care sectors with the creation of two distinct divisions: Community Services and Health Sciences; and it has become the first college in Ontario to appoint a full-time human rights advisor for staff and students.

George Brown's Board of Governors has also changed in the past year to position itself to provide more representative and useful guidance to the college in the coming years. It has undertaken a complete revision of its committee structure, including the addition of committees to look at human resource issues and strategic planning. Its membership has also been strengthened in the past year with the appointment of a new labour representative, bringing the number of board members who are current or former leaders from organized labour to four. Membership of the Board's executive committee includes three women and three men, two of whom are visible minorities.

This has also been a year in which severe financial strictures have challenged the creativity of the Board and staff at all levels. These challenges, which led to the first planned deficit in the college's history, pose a significant threat to the ability of the college to offer its community the breadth and depth of educational opportunities it clearly needs. A reduction in the number of class places for first-year, post-secondary students and a spending restraint program have mitigated the effects in the current year. The college has begun a much larger and more extensive series of spending cuts over the next three years to ensure financial stability.

Despite the rigours of financial restraint, we are optimistic about the immediate future for George Brown and its important work in our community. The college's distinct strengths — its seasoned and committed staff, its flexibility and close ties with its community, particularly with labour, new Canadians and community-based organizations, its flexibility and responsiveness to emerging needs — will stand it in good stead in the coming years. We look forward to communicating these developments to you in future annual reports.



Linda Geluch, Chairperson,
Board of Governors



John Rankin, President

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to be a student-oriented, multicultural, highly diversified, innovative centre of learning in central Metropolitan Toronto, providing high quality education, training, research, development, and social services with integrity, professionalism and a sense of caring.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Increasing Accessibility: For many years, George Brown has operated with the collective understanding that it is not simply a provider of education and training programs. It can be more accurately described as an integral part of Toronto's and Ontario's social development structure. Certainly, the college specializes in providing education and training, but not as an end in itself. Rather, we see our programs and services as the means by which both groups and individuals in our community achieve their social and economic goals. For instance, we provide the means, through our extensive English as a Second Language programming, by which new Canadians become more fully integrated into the working world and expand their economic horizons. We provide the means, through programs and special services, by which people with disabilities learn skills that allow them to take their rightful place as contributing members of our community. We also provide the means, through special programs such as Computer Aided Drafting and Design for Immigrant Women and Women into Trades and Technology, by which women more fully realize their potential and gain access to careers in non-traditional fields.

The college's strategic direction of increasing accessibility is based on this understanding of the critical role George Brown plays in the development of our community. Our goal is to eliminate barriers to full participation in the educational process by any member of our community. The college will also create programs that, in a proactive way, encourage this participation by specific underserved or disenfranchised groups.

This direction was established some years ago with initiatives aimed at eliminating systemic discrimination and creating a policy framework that would forcefully articulate George Brown's interest in accessibility. This phase culminated with the adoption of comprehensive employment equity and race and ethnic relations policies and, in the past year, a comprehensive special needs policy. Recently, George Brown has taken a leadership role in the college system by creating the position of Human Rights Advisor to the president. The rights advisor is charged with speeding implementation of the college's policies, conducting education programs among staff and students, and advising the college on equity or equality issues.

Parallel to policy development and implementation was an intense effort to forge links with organized labour, new Canadians and women's groups, as well as with organizations of people with disabilities and visible minorities in our community. From these preliminary links, the college intends to continue developing a network of connections with the community that will allow it to identify needs and develop programs and services to meet them.

As you know from previous annual reports, these efforts have already yielded impressive results with new programs, courses and services for full-time and part-time learners. Many of these programs are developed and offered in partnership with community-based agencies and organizations.

In the past year, the college has begun several new initiatives that will prove significant in the next few years. These include:

- Co-operative program development with the Native Skills Centre to provide specially designed programs and services for Metro Toronto's 60,000 native people.
- Establishment of an Employment and Training Services for the Unemployed Department in the College's Access Division to create and manage labour adjustment programs. In its first year of operation starting in August, 1991, the department is expected to serve more than 1,000 unemployed people in Toronto. Many clients of the new department use the vocational testing services of George Brown's Career Development Centre to clarify their aptitudes and goals.
- Completion of a feasibility study with the Labour Council of Metro Toronto and York Region to find ways in which the college can better serve the educational needs of workers.
- Expansion of education options for secondary school graduates who have earned most of their credits at the basic level.
- Creation of continuing education courses that are equivalent to the courses in full-time programs to allow wider access to the college's range of educational opportunities to people who work on a full-time basis. In addition, the college has increased services such as resource centres and counselling in the evening and on weekends to reduce the disparity between services for full- and part-time students.

- Development of a proposal for the establishment of a residence for deaf and hard-of-hearing students in downtown Toronto to allow them to take advantage of special George Brown programs and services, as well as the social benefits of living with people of their own distinct culture. This residence would reinforce George Brown's position as a leader in providing educational opportunities for deaf people, and people with disabilities. Supported by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, George Brown recently became the first college in Canada to offer a full-time, post-secondary program that teaches people to become intervenors who work with people who are both deaf and blind.

- Expansion of recruitment and communication campaigns to distinct ethnic and racial groups within our community to increase their understanding of, and participation in, college programs and courses.

Developing Partnerships: George Brown has realized the value of partnerships from its establishment almost 25 years ago. Over the years it has sought — and found — willing partners among governments at all levels in Canada and many other countries, as well as corporations, industry and professional associations, labour organizations, educational institutions, hospitals, charitable foundations, community organizations and agencies.

Our partners have provided us with invaluable expertise and advice as well as access to underserved groups of people. In particular, over 1,300 people serve on the college's 120 advisory committees. During the coming year we will undertake a major review of these committees to ensure their continued effectiveness.

In addition, cost-sharing arrangements with partners have allowed the college to pursue educational ventures that would have been otherwise impossible in periods of financial restraint. For example, in partnership with the Bank of Montreal, the George Brown College Foundation and the federal government, George Brown recently started a full-time program to train deaf people in office and business skills — the first of its kind in Canada.

George Brown will continue to enthusiastically develop partnerships in the coming years. In addition to working with existing partners, we intend to expand our activities to include mutually beneficial relationships with businesses and business sectors within our community.

Working with all our partners, the college can have a great impact in the community — particularly in an era marked by rapid change in the employment base of our local economy, as a result of the current recession and the long-term structural effects of free trade and the global economy.

It is clear that George Brown has a role to play in reducing the dislocation and hardship — particularly for older workers — wrought by the diminishing importance of traditional manufacturing and goods producing industries in and around the city.

George Brown has a critical role to play as a facilitator and provider of service with national and provincial labour adjustment plans, and local and sectoral skills training councils.

An example of the scope of this type of partnership is a recent project with the Electronic Manufacturers Association of Canada, in which the college acted as a facilitator in a communications development project involving unionized and management staff.

The recent signing of the Canada/Ontario Labour Force Development Agreement on Training, with the related establishment of local labour force development boards and the proposed Ontario Training and Adjustment Board, are exciting initiatives reflecting the shared goals of governments, the private sector, organized labour, and the educational sector. They will undoubtedly provide significant opportunities for the college to further develop partnerships with the community.

Increasing general and generic education: The groundbreaking Vision 2000 report clearly articulated a renewed mandate for colleges in Ontario which included, as a key component, providing students with an appropriate amount of general and generic education. George Brown, taking the lead from the report, decided early in 1991 to increase the amount of general and generic education in full-time programs. We also decided to follow the definition and goals for general education found in the Vision 2000 report as a starting point for developing a policy at George Brown.

As a first step in the process, a committee will be established to study the issue and consult with groups within the college. Then, a college-wide curriculum review will be held to ensure programs include an appropriate balance of vocational courses, generic education such as communication, math and science, and general education courses in the arts, humanities and social sciences.

Once the review has taken place, increases in generic and vocational education will be phased in over five years.

Increasing remediation/retention programming: Attrition by full-time students at George Brown, while close to the college-system average, remains a significant cause of concern. Some of these people choose to leave George Brown to start another program or switch to another college. A larger number return to the workforce — particularly after completing their first year of college and successfully working for the summer break. But too many leave college because they cannot keep up with the classwork.

It has always been George Brown's goal to reduce attrition as much as possible, particularly among students who have the potential to successfully complete their programs given appropriate program modifications and services.

Traditional methods of dealing with attrition, such as academic counselling and peer tutoring, have made the difference between success and failure for many students over the years, but they require students to have the self-confidence to identify themselves as having trouble with their classes and actively seek help. Many students are embarrassed by their failures and simply stop coming to class.

The college found that one critical factor affecting attrition is the level at which students read, speak and understand English. A college-wide assessment of first-year students in 1990 found that many students were functioning at an English level that would make understanding college-level material difficult, and in some cases impossible.

On the basis of this survey, the college began a compulsory English assessment program for all new students in the fall of 1991. The results were used to tailor remedial programs for students who needed them.

This initiative of the college's English and Liberal Studies Department is a clear indication of the direction that George Brown will go in the next few years. The college will seek ways to identify students who are 'at risk' and create a responsive academic environment in which individual needs are met. This initiative is particularly appropriate at George Brown, which serves many new Canadians for whom English is a second language.

COMMUNITY NEEDS ANALYSIS

External Environment: George Brown College serves the population of the City of Toronto, but the external environment that has an impact on college operations extends far beyond its boundaries. The changes we have witnessed in the last year have included the effects of the globalization of trade as well as downward, cyclical movement in the city's local economy.

These forces have combined to greatly increase the number of business failures and bankruptcies, as well as dramatically increase the number of unemployed people. Particularly hard hit have been manufacturing, goods producing, fashion and garment industries, as well as building and materials-handling sectors.

The long-term effects of restructuring of global trade are expected to continue to have a negative impact on levels of economic activity in the manufacturing and goods producing sector in the Toronto area, as more goods are produced in other countries and imported to Canada. Institutions and individuals must develop strategies to exploit the opportunities of globalization. George Brown can play a role in giving individuals the requisite skills to participate in these opportunities.

A number of local trends will continue to have an impact on George Brown. These include:

- The movement of businesses and employment to the suburban areas of Toronto, with more people becoming reluctant to commute to the centre of the city for work or education. The cost and scarcity of land is expected to continue to dampen business growth.
- An aging population generally, with a growing variety of education needs — particularly for older, displaced workers and recent immigrants. Employment levels, particularly among older workers, will continue to be affected by the rapid change in workplace methods and technology.
- Reduced taxation revenue will have a negative impact on the budgets of governments at all levels, as well as government-funded institutions and agencies, for several years to come. The levels of spending and employment in the large public-administration sector are expected to stagnate or shrink slightly.
- The growth of the service sector, including financial services, retail and hospitality operations, is expected to continue in coming years, despite high failure rates during the current recession.
- Increasing levels of immigration to Canada are likely to have significant impact on the population of the Toronto area.

Internal Environment: The college has entered an era in which there is growing disparity between the costs of college activities, particularly salary levels, and the amount of revenue that these activities create. In short, the grants or other subsidies earned by many activities fail to cover the costs involved.

In this past year, George Brown attempted to reduce the growing financial burden of the college by curtailing growth in the number of first-year students in post-secondary programs. In addition, the college postponed the introduction of several new programs. Nevertheless, the college is facing a budget deficit of about \$2 million in the current year, including a large expenditure to eliminate the danger of asbestos in several of our buildings.

Over the next three years, the college will undertake an ambitious program of financial controls that will result in removing \$3 million in baseline expenditures. This program is necessary to ensure the college's financial reserves do not fall below \$2 million.

Everything will be done to reduce the impact of this financial crisis on the level of services offered to our community, but it is certain to reduce, at least to some extent, the breadth and depth of college activities. One effect this year has been a reduction in peer tutoring services for students.

Other major initiatives and trends in the past year have included:

- Growth in federal government funding for retraining programs specifically designed to meet the needs of people who are unemployed as a result of the current recession.
- Increasing activities to improve the quality of student life, including new campus services and the appointment of a human rights advisor who, through staff training and awareness programs, will create an environment which addresses issues of inequity and harassment.
- An increasing interest in campus safety, leading to a safety audit of all campuses, remedial physical restructuring at one campus and a pilot program of evening safety patrols at another.

George Brown



The City College

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